

***What is claimed is:***

1. A method of providing conference call capabilities using a data network for call set-up, the method comprising the steps of:

- a) providing voice and data communication paths from voice and data communication networks to an individual's communications device;
- b) providing a teleconference platform coupled between said communications device and a teleconference-enabled switch; and
- c) in response to a teleconference set-up command received at said teleconference platform from said communications device via the data communications network, forwarding the set-up command to the teleconference-enabled switch.

2. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of:

- d) in response to receiving the set-up command at the teleconference-enabled switch, extending outbound calls over the voice communication network to conference call participants; and
- e) bridging the outbound calls together to form a conference call.

3. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein in performing step b), providing a database of directory listings at the teleconferencing platform, said database including individual and group listings of names and telephone numbers to facilitate the selection of participants for a teleconference call.

4. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein in performing step b), providing a network-controlling server at the teleconference platform for responding to teleconference commands from the data communication network, translating said data network commands into telephony-based teleconferencing commands and transmitting said telephony-based teleconference commands via the voice communication network to the teleconference-enabled switch.

5. The method as defined in claim 4 wherein in performing step b), further providing a web server at the teleconference platform to communicate between the individual's communications device and the network-controlling server.

5        6. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein in performing step b), providing a scheduling element at the teleconference platform for retrieving requested conference call time and listing of participants associated with the teleconference command and scheduling the teleconference call, in response to a teleconference command request received from a remotely-located user.

10        7. The method as defined in claim 6 wherein in performing step b), further providing a notification element at the teleconference platform for notifying each participant of the time and date for the conference call.

15        8. The method as defined in claim 7 wherein the notification is sent over the data communication network to at least one participant.

19        9. The method as defined in claim 8 wherein an email notification is sent.

20        10. The method as defined in claim 8 wherein an instant messaging notification is sent.

25        11. The method as defined in claim 7 wherein the notification is sent over the voice network to at least one participant.

29        12. The method as defined in claim 11 wherein a paging notification is sent.

33        13. The method as defined in claim 11 wherein a voicemail notification is sent.

37        14. The method as defined in claim 11 wherein a fax notification is sent.

15. A network-based platform for providing teleconference capabilities to remotely-located subscribers via a data network connection, the platform comprising  
a network-controlling server for receiving data network-based commands related to teleconference set-up, translating the commands into telecommunications commands  
5 and forwarding the telecommunications commands to a teleconference-enabled switch;  
and  
a web server responsive to teleconference commands received via a data communication network from subscribers and forwarding the commands to the network-controlling server.

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16. The network-based platform as defined in claim 15 wherein the platform further comprises  
a database of directory listings, accessible by subscribers via a data communication network and directly accessible by the web server, to provide telephone  
15 listing information to assist in the selection of conference call participants.

17. The network-based platform as defined in claim 15 wherein the platform further comprises  
a scheduling element for storing requests for conference call dates and times,  
20 including a participant listing for each stored request; and  
a notification element for sending a conference call alert to each participant included in the participant listing.

18. The network-based platform as defined in claim 17 wherein the scheduling  
25 element further includes a response module receptive to return information from participants and modifying information in the participant listing accordingly.

19. The network-based platform as defined in claim 15 wherein the network-controlling server comprises a computer/telephony interface (CTI) server.